

# Religion Readiness and the Young Child

Faith formation is unique in the life of a preschool child. It is a time when important foundations are being created and general religious concepts are being introduced for the first time. Faith formation in these early years of life will directly support the ongoing growth in faith through life, and it is an important time. It is a time and an educational process that is most often referred to as one of religion readiness.

## Building Foundational Skills

One way to understand religion readiness is to compare it to readiness approaches to other subjects. In reading readiness, for example, the preschool or kindergarten child is first introduced to reading through simple tasks and concepts, such as learning that a book is opened from the right side or that you look at a page from top to bottom and left to right. Letters in the alphabet are taught one by one and simple sounds are introduced slowly and repetitively.

In math readiness, young children are first encouraged to “play” with objects, or manipulatives, and notice simple facts, such as whether they have many or few of

these objects. They are invited to move the objects around and, in some cases, may even be ready to begin counting some of them.

Each of the activities in a readiness approach to any subject is a crucial part of the learning process. The lessons learned at this stage serve to lay the groundwork for other skills and understandings that will be developed at a later time.

*“Religion readiness is about developing basic religious sensibilities and understandings that prepare the preschool child for . . . a life of faith.”*

## Introducing Religious Concepts

Religion readiness is applying this same foundational approach to learning in the area of religious education. It is about first developing basic religious sensibilities and understandings and introducing key religious themes that will prepare the preschool child for future religious education and, ultimately, for a life of faith.

In a religion-readiness program, important concepts are learned through such things as being welcomed, recognizing oneself as special, wondering at the world of creation, and discovering that one belongs to a Church family. These become the foundational understandings necessary for beginning faith development.

## First Steps of Faith

*Stories of God's Love* is a religion-readiness program that prepares the preschool child by introducing the essential faith concepts, themes and values in a way that engages the child and utilizes the gifts and needs of this age level. All of the material within this program is presented in an age-appropriate way with the particular educational needs of the young child in mind.

By looking at the structure and focus of the introductory chapters and core units of this program, you will see that great care has been taken to present concepts that build within the child a basic understanding of faith that they will revisit and expand upon throughout their lives. Through religion readiness, *Stories of God's Love* will help the young child take their first steps of faith.